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Barry Parker: Sketch for praca with jacaranda planting in Jardim America, c1917-8 (First Garden City Heritage Museum, Letchworth)

Barry Parker: before and after Jardim America

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Barry Parker: before and after Jardim America

Abstract:

Barry Parker (1867-1967) is usually considered the aesthete in the partnership with Raymond Unwin (1863-1940), formed in Buxton, Derbyshire in 1895. Unwin wrote to Parker's sister, Ethel (who became Unwin's wife), that Barry had suggested division of labour with he (Parker) doing the artistic part and me (Unwin) the practical. Parker's major publication was a series on Arts and Crafts homes, 1910-12, in the American journal *The Craftsman*. Yet there were also innovative groupings of cottages as generators of layouts: culs-de-sac and quadrangles, recurrent motifs since the 1890s. The partnership ceased in 1914 when Unwin was appointed Chief Planning Inspector to the Local Government Board.

In 1914, Parker (with Unwin) was a founder member of the (Royal) Town Planning Institute. Next year he travelled to (O)Porto, Portugal to remodel a central boulevard leading to the site for a new City Hall. His recommendation for architecture of shaded colonnades, white plastered walls and low key classical details revived a tradition from the 18th century when designs by John Carr of York had been built in the city. The buildings, as constructed, were eclectic, with a Florid Flemish revival City Hall, but the refined handling of urban space was followed from Parker's concept. The scheme was published extensively in England, exhibited at the Royal Academy, and commended by Patrick Abercrombie, a leader in urban design. Perhaps conscious of the limitations of unified where ownership was mixed, Parker published a paper on 'Horizontality and Verticality in town planning' in 1916, which deserves to be better known.

In 1916 Dr Silva de Freire commissioned Unwin to plan Jardim America, a low density suburb of Sao Paulo for the City Improvement and Freehold Land Company, which had purchase a 96 hectare tract adjoining the grid layout of an earlier city extension. Unwin's initial plan introduced diagonals and a central gyratory, developed from Sollershott Circus at Letchworth. In January 1917 Barry Parker travelled to Brazil to refine the layout, designing many houses, relandscaping a major park, and providing advice on the planned extension of Sao Paulo and other regional cities. George Macedo Viera (1894-1978) who was an intern in the Jardim America office planned Brazilian new settlements in the 1930s and 1940s.

Home from Brazil, Parker was appointed consultant at New Earswick, York in succession to Unwin, now Chief Officer in the Ministry of Health. Parker designed innovative housing schemes in the 1920s, and was consultant architect at Letchworth until 1941. In 1925, with Unwin and Howard he attended the International Garden Cities and Town Planning Federation conference in New York. Deeply impressed by the landscaped parkways of Westchester County, he obtained slides his TPI Presidential Address in 1929. In 1927 he had been appointed by Manchester City Council to plan Wythenshawe as a Garden City satellite. The innovative masterplan included neighbourhoods and parkways, and linked to the postwar new town concept.

Jardim America provided an important element in a career continuum of integrating amenity and landscaping into community planning, a recurrent theme in Parker's work.

[500 words]

Key words: Garden suburbs; housing, garden reserves, parks and parkways, amenity and landscaping

Barry Parker: Before and after Jardim America

‘The artistic and the practical’

(Richard) Barry Parker (1867-1947), architect and town planner was the eldest son of Robert Parker (1826-1901) and his wife Frances (nee Booth) (1835-1922). Born at Chesterfield, Derbyshire on 18 November 1867, educated in Ashover, Buxton and at Wesley College, Barry Parker attended T C Simmonds's Atelier of Art, Derby, 1886-9, taking external examinations at South Kensington School of Art, London. From 1889-92, he was articled to G Faulkner Armitage (1849-1937), architect, of Altrincham, Cheshire, whose studio included craft workshops and a smithy. Parker also acted as Armitage's clerk-of-works at Brockhampton Court, Herefordshire, returning north to Buxton, Derbyshire, in 1894, to design three houses for his father in the Park Ring, including the family home 'Moorlands', and commencing practice as an architect. (Parker CM 1970)

In 1893, Parker's elder sister, Ethel (1865-1949), married her half-cousin, Raymond Unwin (1863-1940): distrustful of Unwin's Socialist League activities, Robert Parker long disapproved of the match. Unwin had grown up in Oxford, deeply influenced by Ruskin, Morris and the Socialist philosopher Edward Carpenter, and rejected a scholarship to read for Holy orders. He served an engineering apprenticeship at Chesterfield, worked for two years in Manchester, then for the Staveley Coal and Iron Company at Barrow Hill, near Chesterfield. In 1894, Barry Parker, who responded to Morris's reforms in decorative design rather than his politics, collaborated with Unwin over St Andrew's Church, Barrow Hill, prelude to partnership in 1896, with offices in Buxton, Derbyshire. (Miller 1992, 12-13)

Parker is considered the aesthete of the partnership. As early as 1891, Unwin had written to Ethel that Barry had suggested division of labour with ‘he (Parker) doing the artistic part and me (Unwin) the practical’. ⁽¹⁾ Parker's designed many individual middle-class houses, often complete with fittings and furniture. The influence of C F A Voysey (1857-1940) and M H Baillie Scott (1865-1945) was evident in Parker's work, including 'The Shanty', Marple,

Cheshire (1895-6), 'Chetwynd', Northwood, Staffordshire (1899-1902), 'The Homestead', Chesterfield, Derbyshire (1903-5), and 'Whirriestone', Rochdale, Lancashire (1907-9) (Miller 1998). There was simplification of form, and boldness of spatial design, integrating interiors into a total ensemble. Parker's major publication of his Arts and Crafts appeared in the American journal *The Craftsman* from 1910-12 (Hawkes (ed) 1986).

Unwin brought engineering and costing skills to the partnership, but wished to design working-class housing. Parker assisted visualisation of his ideal, with sketches for 'An Artisan's Living Room'(1895) and an, unbuilt, housing quadrangle for a Bradford site (c.1898) - which appeared in their joint book, *The Art of Building a Home* (incorporating Parker's earlier manifesto *Our Homes* (1895)) (Parker and Unwin 1901 109-133, plates 6-12, 34-38). If Unwin's prime interest was efficient design and planning of cottages, Parker ensured that design values were not neglected. His *Craftsman* articles also included innovative groupings of cottages as generators of layouts: culs-de-sac and quadrangles, recurrent motifs since the 1890s, although less known than Unwin's more widely published work (Hawkes (ed) 1986, 143-148).

Theory into practice and the Garden City

The Art of Building a Home introduced Parker and Unwin to a liberal-minded readership, which had already embraced the Arts and Crafts Movement's design reforms. Some of the illustrations may have appeared provincial, but projected a robust craft-based imagery, with austere interiors, where 'useless' decoration was eliminated, yet still embraced 'the legitimate dominion of beauty'.⁽²⁾ Unwin's contributions on the layout of cottages, his first foray into community planning, were illustrated by Parker, and foresaw the dominance of Arts and Crafts values throughout their subsequent involvement with the classic lineage of Garden City communities. The period 1900-1903 laid the ground for their key appointments.

Both were involved in prototype designs at the turn of the century. The 'Artisan's Living Room' sketch was transposed into Unwin's aspirational design for a house to be built outside the Derbyshire town of Chapel-en-le-Frith, a short train ride to the Buxton office (Parker and Unwin 1901 Plates 5, 37). Although unbuilt in its proposed site, it became a prototype for the dominant steep-gabled houses in grouped cottage blocks at New Earswick and Letchworth. Parker too, appears to have been involved with the lower, gable-dominated pair built at

Church Stretton, Shropshire in 1900-01. (Miller 1992 31, fig.8) The scene was set for what Sir Frederic Osborn (1885-1978), a father figure in the Town and Country Planning Association termed 'democratisation of design'.⁽³⁾

After 1900 Raymond Unwin became the public face of building Ebenezer Howard's 'object lesson' First Garden City. In September 1901, Unwin attended the Garden City Association Conference at Bournville, (which also brought him the commission for Joseph Rowntree's model village of New Earswick, north of York, a trial run for the more First Garden City. Often considered to be solely an 'Unwin' project pre-1919, it was Barry Parker who sketched and possibly designed the first pair of cottages built at New Earswick in 1903. He and Unwin collaborated on cottage designs, which became a staple of the practice. Publication of Unwin's Fabian Society tract *Cottage Plans and Common Sense* in 1902, (Unwin 1902; Miller 1992 32-34) and '*Cottages near a Town*' exhibited at the Northern Artworkers' Guild in Manchester in 1903 saw Parker was closely involved with the latter (Miller 1992 38-40). These assisted cottage design as a kit of related elements, to be varied on site as topography and orientation required. Their theory that consistent design quality should underlie the full range from cottage to country house had received national publicity under the headline 'Concerning the coming revolution in domestic architecture' in the *Daily Mail* in October 1901, illustrated by Parker's sketches (Miller 1998 183-5).

Unwin had become close to Ebenezer Howard by 1902, when the search for a site for the First Garden City began in earnest. In 1903, Unwin took part in the limited competition for the layout for Letchworth, the first Garden City. His layout, with its bold axis from Norton Common to Hitchin Road, web layout for the centre (derived from part of Sir Christopher Wren's famous plan for rebuilding the City of London after the Great Fire of London) and the proto-neighbourhood housing areas became an instant icon of the Garden City Movement (Miller 1992 52-58). Yet it was Parker who was called before the Engineering Committee to give reference of his partner's experience.⁽⁴⁾ In 1904, after approval of the plan, the Parker and Unwin office moved to Baldock, Hertfordshire, two miles from Letchworth, and in 1907 to a thatched office block at No 296 Norton Way South, Letchworth (now the First Garden City Heritage Museum). Unwin moved to Hampstead Garden Suburb in 1906, opening a separate office at 'Wyldes', which became his home. In her later years, Parker's widow corresponded with Lewis Mumford, Frederic Osborn and Walter Creese to attempt to redress the imbalance, as she saw it, between the acclamation of Raymond Unwin and her late

husband's undeserved obscurity (Parker, CM 1970). She claimed (without substance in any documentation that I have examined) that Henrietta Barnett, promoter of Hampstead Garden Suburb was considering Parker's appointment to plan the new venture. She arrived quite early, and the Parkers, recently married, had not risen, and took no notice of the impatient rat-a-tat on their front door. Frustrated, Mrs Barnett went next door where the Unwins had been up-and-doing since dawn: Unwin got the job and Parker's subsequent contribution to her Suburb was limited, but distinctive. ⁽⁵⁾

Hearth and home

The extensive cottage estates at Letchworth and Hampstead Garden Suburb set standards for the new century. Parker continued to design individual houses: at Letchworth these included 'Laneside' and 'Crabby Corner', a semi-detached pair built 1904 in Letchworth Lane, where he and Unwin were neighbours for a short while. Parker married (Constance) Mabel Burton (1882-1974) in 1906; birth of their two sons, Geoffrey Barry (1909-79) and Robert (1914- ?) required the extension of 'Crabby Corner' with a three storey tower having an open air sleeping porch on its top floor. Other individual Letchworth houses by Parker included 'Glaed Haem' (1906) and No 102 Wilbury Road (1909, for his brother, Stanley). (Miller 2002 53-74) He also designed the earliest community buildings, the Mrs Howard Memorial Hall, Norton Way South (1906) and 'The Skittles Inn' (The Settlement), Nevells Road (1907). Parker was personally involved with the development of cottage estates for a Copartnership developer, Garden City Tenants. These included Westholm Green (1906), its layout based on an Unwin layout illustrated in *The Art of Building a Home*, Bird's Hill (1906-7) which included a village green and a cul-de-sac to develop the site in depth, which together with the larger proto-neighbourhood block, Pixmore (1907-9), was illustrated in Unwin's seminal *Town Planning in Practice* (1909).(Unwin 1909, 348-9 Ills 267 and 268) In 1910-11 a new developer, Howard Cottage Society, began work, and together with the earlier Letchworth Cottages and Buildings company, developed Rushby Mead (1910-1911) facing Howard Park, perhaps the most refined of the HCS schemes, with major contributions from Bennett and Bidwell (both partners of whom had been interns in the Parker and Unwin office) and Courtenay Crickmer (a London architect who had settled in Letchworth and produced exemplary housing designs until the 1950s) (Miller 2002 62-4). The Glebe Estate (1908-14) was on a larger scale, virtually a neighbourhood block with central shops and a school on its northern edge. As initially planned by Unwin there were several east-west roads – these were

reduced under the phased development of the site. Building costs rose sharply after 1912, and Parker's 'L' plan layout for the Howard Cottage Society on the corners of Glebe Road and Green Lane were refined minimal designs, with cream-painted roughcast walls and green painted windows a combination which represented the epitome of Garden City design, and looked towards the austere exteriors of his Jardim America designs.

In the private sector too, there were notable advances. The twin 'L' blocks framing the north side of the junction of Sollershott East and Field Lane included a continuous low-pitched hipped roof ending in massive brick chimneys where the road cut through. As befitted a more expensive scheme leaded-light casement windows were used – the sense of line and the bold overhanging eaves almost created a British version of the American 'prairie house'.

Oporto

In 1914, Parker (alongside Unwin) was a founder member of the (Royal) Town Planning Institute, a measure of the growing professionalism of a discipline that merged the constituent skills of architects, surveyors and civil engineers. ⁽⁶⁾ Their partnership ceased the same year when Unwin was appointed Chief Planning Inspector to the Local Government Board: Parker carried on the practice but many projects were cancelled after the outbreak of the First World War. Parker had work in Brussels and left only days before the German invasion of Belgium. ⁽⁷⁾ In contrast to Unwin, who became involved with the British government's housing for munitions workers, (Miller 1992 154-60) Parker undertook two major foreign consultancy projects. Mabel Parker recalled that the Liberal politician (and Prime Minister 1916-22), David Lloyd George, suggested to Parker that projects for non-combatant nations would foster international relations after the war.

As Portugal's second city, Oporto possesses an eclectic urban tradition, influenced by English Palladianism in the 18th century (particularly the work of John Carr of York (1723-1807) who designed several buildings in the city), and by 'Haussmania' at the turn of the 19th. The Avenida dos Aliados, and the rebuilding of the Camara Municipal was one of the most important landmarks of the city's early 20th century urbanism. Oporto City Council began planning major improvements in the late 1880s. In 1889, the engineer, Carlos de Pezerat proposed a grand boulevard between the Praca Don Pedro [Praca da Liberdade] and Praca Trindade. Jose Marques da Silva, City architect 1904-7, and his successor, Correia da Silva

were influenced by French beaux-arts practice, and updated Pezerat's proposals for a comprehensive plan of city improvements (Tavares 1985-6). In 1913, an Aesthetics Commission was formed to evaluate the design of city buildings, followed by a Technical Commission in 1915, to examine city improvements in detail. Councillor Elisio de Melo, in charge of public works, urged the appointment of an eminent foreign consultant.

Parker arrived in Oporto in late August 1915, for an eleven-week stay. (Miller 2004) He reworked Pezerat's plan as a wedge-shaped tapering boulevard, and sited the Camara Municipal centrally at the head, facing a new town square, deliberately low-key to provide axial visibility of the Trindade church tower beyond. The architectural style was Palladian Classical, with Portuguese vernacular touches. His concept for the flanking buildings introduced courtyards with linking shaded colonnades, white plastered walls and low key classical details. Parker's initial plan attracted criticism- as a cul-de-sac rather than a boulevard, but a revised version was approved in November 1915. Back in England, Parker developed the scheme in greater detail, most likely with the assistance of Charles Holloway James (1893-1953) (who became one of the most eminent civic designers in the interwar period). It was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1916, and commended by Patrick Abercrombie (1879-1957), leader in urban design and in 1945 author of the Greater London Plan. (Parker and Abercrombie 1916) Parker's final report also included reconstruction of the cathedral district, and a new road to the Ponte Luiz I. (Parker 1916b)

Construction of the Avenida dos Aliados commenced in 1916, and the new Camara Municipal, designed by Correia da Silva was begun in June 1920. The elaborate Franco-Flemish building with its central tower contrasts with Parker's simpler concept, but confirms the appropriateness of the tapering boulevard and axial gardens of its setting. Parker had achieved mediation between the vista and the closure of urban space, in a rare example of Garden City urbanism. Perhaps conscious of the limitations of unified architecture where ownership was mixed, he published a paper on 'Horizontality and Verticality in town planning' in 1916, which deserves to be better known. (Parker 1916a)

Jardim America

In August 1916 *Garden Cities and Town Planning* announced 'South America's first Garden City development', a suburban expansion of Sao Paulo, where the population had increased

tenfold, from 47,000 in 1886. The Director of Public Works, Dr Victor da Silva Freire and his consulting architect, J. Bouvard were attempting to rationalise expansion of the city, including widening of principal roads and provision of parks. Freire had visited Letchworth and Hampstead Garden Suburb. They were encouraging the City of Sao Paulo Improvement and Freehold Land Company, the largest landholder, to undertake low density garden suburb development, the first of which lay on the south-west of the city, in an area where a conventional street grid had already been platted. The 'Companiha City' as it was known locally, had been floated in England in January 1911 by Edward de Lavelaye, with Bouvard, backed by Boulton Brothers, Financiers. The original layout of 1913 showed a large central square with four diagonal roads (BCCC Information Guide and Directory 2006 13-21). In 1915, they commissioned Raymond Unwin to prepare a layout (site unseen) for a 240 acre (46 hectare) tract, bisected by a principal boulevard – Avenida Brasil, bounded by Avenida Estados Unidos on the north and Rua Groenlandia on the south (South America's first Garden City development, 1916). Unwin's plan featured a central gyratory from which diagonals radiated (a vestige of the earlier plan) – a more regular pattern than Sollershott Circus in Letchworth, and possibly taken from a layout he had prepared in 1914 for Marino, Dublin, in partnership with Patrick Geddes and Frank Mears (Miller 1985 fig. 3.7a 178). The crisp geometry of Unwin's layout also bears resemblance to his seminal diagram of 'The Garden City Principle applied to Suburbs' (Unwin 1912). Introducing curved roads was a novel feature, although the minimum 16m width was broader than in the English Garden Cities. Together with the requirement for detached houses this mitigated against enclosed spaces defined by groups and terraces, found in the English interpretation of the work of Camillo Sitte (1843-1903). A feature of the plan was the inclusion of internal block reserves for communal gardens, also found in Letchworth between Sollershott West, Broadway and Hitchin Road.

Photographs showed that central roads, and a tramway connection to the city centre had been opened. The first houses were rather stark boxes with low-pitched roofs. Plots were to be leased for individual construction: design control was not comprehensive. However, the city council required trees planted ever 8m along all roads. Overall, this was a middle-class enclave, not a comprehensive endorsement of the Howardian ideals of a self-contained settlement, with housing for all classes, an industrial area, and a constitution requiring surpluses from enhanced valuation above operating expenses to be returned to the community. Rather, it represented transference of the values of a high status garden suburb.

However, Jardim America created a pattern followed in Jardim Paulista, Jardim Europa and many others throughout Sao Paulo and beyond.

Cryptically the *GC&TP* article stated that ‘a well-known English town planner is being consulted with reference to further similar developments’. Thus it was that in January 1917, Barry Parker embarked on a Dutch ship at Falmouth, Cornwall for the long and potentially hazardous wartime voyage to Santos. He expected to spend a month to six weeks, but stayed for two years. (Parker 1919 143) He reviewed the plan for Jardim America, terminating two diagonal through routes, cutting the length of roads, increasing the number and designing in detail the garden reserves, and making the settlement more self-contained. He designed houses in an understated Latin American vernacular, with white rendered walls, shuttered windows and pantiled roofs, some with geometrical plans intended to achieve groupings around the *pracas*. The junction of Rua Colombia, Rua Guatemala and Rua Nicaragua was a key example: a concentration of Parker-designed houses with wedge and angled footprints on irregular plots, attempting to contain the central space by buildings, following one of the diagrams from Unwin’s *Town Planning in Practice* (Unwin 1909 343 Ills 261, 262, 262a). Parker supervised construction by workers unused to reading detailed drawings, often by providing basic sketches of each element. The houses were soon sold stimulating plot sales. A book from 1923 showed substantial development with eclectic architecture by local architects, W Fillinger, Esparto Rossi, Renato Agular and Royston McLennan Harding contrasting with the pattern book Parker types and later examples by George S Dodd of the Companiha Office (*Jardim America Illustrado* 1923). Development on the original layout was complete by 1930, following which incursions were made into the reserves, creating small residential *culs-de-sac* (the original 396 plots had been increased to 672 by this means when the development was officially completed in 1941). On the north of the suburb the Club Athletico Paulista was founded facing Rua Estados Unidos.

Tree planting had not matured when Parker was in Brazil. However, he sketched seductive images of avenues bordered with jacarandas creating purple-hazed Arcadian verdure through which buildings were barely visible – the quintessential high status, low density garden suburb. (Parker 1919; Parker 1920b; Parker 1921; Parker 1925b) In this respect Jardim America is comparable with the vaster, lower density Bungalow Zones of New Delhi, laid out on Edwin Lutyens’ masterly geometric plan, and planted with consummate skill by W. R. Mustoe. (Miller 2011)

Parker's other work in Brazil is less well documented in England. On his return in February 1919, he wrote of meetings with the Sao Paulo City Council to obtain modifications to the highway regulations, and a report on a further garden suburb at Pacaembu due west of the city centre. This had already been proposed before Parker's arrival, and he consulted the Prefect of the municipality over highway standards. Parker and Unwin both favoured narrower roads within housing estates to save development costs – they could not have foreseen the impact of universal car ownership which now chokes the culs-de-sac in Hampstead Garden Suburb. At Pacaembu, Parker achieved higher density, and predominantly curved roads: development in quantity did not commence until after his departure. Then Parker was called in to plan workers' housing at Lapa, where the Armour Company of Chicago had built a meat-packing plant. He designed adaptable plans and presumably a layout, though nothing was illustrated in the British journals. A one-off project was the house and garden for the British Consul at Sao Paulo. He also advised on planning at the spa resort of Pocos de Caldas in Minas Gerais, including extensive gardens around the Palace Hotel (opened 1922) and baths. (Parker 1919; Parker 1920b)

Parker's interest in strategic overall planning was engaged by his concern for parks and landscaping. This has been a major theme at the Royal Institute of British Architects' international Town Planning Conference in London in 1910. The park systems of the great cities of the USA: Chicago and Boston were shown, with landscape design by Daniel Burnham and Olmsted.⁽⁸⁾ These may have influenced Parker's suggestion for a peripheral park ring to contain and articulate the accelerating spread of Sao Paulo, which he reported as 'enthusiastically taken up' (but with little tangible result).(Parker 1920b 48) He also redesigned the Parque Paulista, cutting axial vistas through its dense trees and designing entrance pavilions and a pergola along the frontage on Avenida Paulista. (Parker 1921)

During Parker's stay in Sao Paulo, a young graduate intern, Jorge Macedo Viera (1894-1978) worked in the City Companhia Office, and carried forward projects which were incomplete when Parker left for home. Viera became a leading planner of Brazilian new settlements from the 1930s onwards, examples such as Maringa updating the Garden City concept. (Bonfato 2003)

The consultancy for Jardim America occurred at the mid-point of Parker's career and enabled him to broaden his approach to integrate more fully amenity and landscaping into community planning, which underlay a design continuum which attained its most mature expression at Wythenshawe. Jardim America affirmed the successful transference of British Garden Suburbs to a tropical milieu, and its adaptability to local conditions. His Brazil residency stimulated Parker to engage with the strategic regional implications of Garden City planning, the significance of which underlay his work on Wythenshawe.

Interwar consultancy and conferences

The British post-1919 housing schemes resulted from commitment to improve standards through an ambitious construction programme by local government, assisted by state subsidy. Unwin had been a leading figure on the Tudor Walters Committee, whose report published in 1918 endorsed Garden City standards, which became compulsory under the 1919 Housing Act. Barry Parker was among the well-known architects who designed local authority schemes: at Newark, Nottinghamshire; Wakefield, Yorkshire; Bridport, Dorset, and Loughborough, Leicestershire. (CM Parker 1970 and 'Loughborough Corporation housing estate' 1930) The last, regarded as one of the finest of its type, was visited by Manchester City Housing Committee, when considering appointment of a consultant for Wythenshawe.

At Letchworth he continued to update the layout plan to reflect newer practice – the north-east neighbourhood around Bedford Road was laid out in the late 1920s. The transition from pre-war cottage estates to their postwar successors such as Jackmans Place (Bennett and Bidwell) or Pixmore (Crickmer) (both 1919-21) was seamless. In view of his extensive local authority work it is surprising that Parker was not directly involved in the housing programmes of the newly created Letchworth Urban District Council.

At New Earswick, Parker was appointed consultant in succession to Unwin, (Parker 1920a) who became Chief Officer for Housing and Town Planning in the Ministry of Health. The layout plan introduced a loop road with culs-de-sac – each subtly varied and landscaped, with housing groups defining public spaces. Modest annual building programmes throughout the 1920s encouraged variations on the underlying design themes.(Parker 1923; Parker 1926; Parker 1937)

Parker was a regular delegate at the biennial interwar conferences of the International Garden Cities and Town Planning Federation, which held its first full event at Gothenburg in 1923. The 1925 Conference was held in New York. Parker, with Unwin and Ebenezer Howard comprised a formidable delegation of the British leaders of the movement. Lewis Mumford (1895-1990) the eminent cultural sociologist, recalled Parker as ‘one of the handsomest men I ever met, a true artist from head to foot’.⁽⁹⁾ Parker was stimulated by visits to the great parks (Parker 1925a) and the parkway roads of Westchester County, on the northern suburban fringe of New York. Deeply impressed he obtained slides for his Presidential Address to the Town Planning Institute in 1929. (Parker 1929) Parkways were introduced in his Wythenshawe plan, and in the early 1930s Letchworth Gate was laid out as a parkway connection from the first Garden City to the Great North Road (A1), the major road from London to north-east England.

Wythenshawe: from parkland to Parkerland

One of the most complete municipal experiments in garden city design was carried out at Wythenshawe, a few miles to the south of Manchester, a city bursting out of its boundaries by the early 20th century. (Miller 2010 80-86) Manchester’s housing programme sprang from the enthusiasm of Alderman W D Jackson, Chairman of the Public Health Committee, and E D Simon (1879-1960) Chairman of the Housing Committee. In March 1920 Patrick Abercrombie identified Wythenshawe as the only undeveloped land suitable for building close to Manchester and recommended building a satellite, separated from the city by a green belt. That December the Corporation resolved to purchase the 2,468-acre (998.7ha) estate. Simon purchased the 16th century Wythenshawe Hall and park, and presented them to the city. In October 1926 Unwin and W G Weeks held a public local inquiry into ministerial loan sanction for the projected satellite, which the Minister of Health, Neville Chamberlain, subsequently approved. In January 1927 the Corporation convened the Wythenshawe Estate Special Committee. The town clerk contacted Unwin, requesting advice about a consultant: Parker’s appointment in August hinted at continued influence of the old partnership: he was urged to plan to combine amenity with financial advantage to the city.

Lewis Mumford regarded Parker’s plan as a bold updating of Howard’s garden city.⁽¹⁰⁾ Parker incorporated a variant on the Radburn neighbourhood superblock, recently designed by Henry Wright (1878-1939) and Clarence Stein (1883-1975). Parker’s 1928 report specified a

highway hierarchy of traffic streets and residential neighbourhood units with community facilities, a town centre, industrial zones, open spaces and a peripheral green belt. Most revolutionary were the main high-speed arteries, the parkways – attaining mature form in his 1931 plan – reflecting his enthusiasm for American innovations and advanced practice. (Creese 1966; Miller 2002b)

Purchase of additional land 1929 brought the landholdings to 1,435 ha in 1929. Implementation was frustrated by hostility from Cheshire rural districts, requiring legislation to bring the land within Manchester's boundary. Economic depression in the 1930s and cutbacks in housing finance inhibited achievement of the full potential. Parker, 60 at the time of his appointment, continued as consultant until March 1941, but relations with the Manchester city architect, who designed most of the housing, became strained. Supported by Simon, Parker soldiered on. Notwithstanding the difficulties, Wythenshawe outstripped the combined population of Letchworth and Welwyn Garden City by the mid-1930s: testimony to the swift municipalisation of the garden city.

The layout retained Wythenshawe Park as a public amenity, with housing development to the north and south, including attractive mansard-roofed cottages. Parker's influence was to be found in the short culs-de-sac and articulated housing groups, similar to his designs in the western neighbourhood at New Earswick. Tree preservation was aided by adjusting the layouts. The most intensive pre-war building occurred in the Royal Oak, Benchill and Sharston neighbourhoods, with an estimated population of 21,000 out of 37,700 total by 1945. Neighbourhood shops were built – for example the Sale Road 'Circle' – but the Second World War prevented commencement of the major centre, which was relocated southwards in the revised post-war layout and fitfully begun as an isolated precinct in 1962. The *City of Manchester Plan 1945*, by R Nicholas, city engineer and surveyor, anticipated a total population of 79,000 on completion in 1975 – the scale of a 'first generation' new town under the 1946 legislation. Indeed, Wythenshawe was described as such in a City Council leaflet of 1953.

The first section of Princess Parkway was completed to Altrincham Road by 1933: its high-quality landscaping was sensational – striking confirmation of the Arts and Crafts philosophy that efficient function gave potential for beautifying form. (Parker 1933) However, it was always intended to continue south to Ringway, the new city airport (opened 1938) and

beyond. The 1945 plan recognised that the parkway would become a barrier, dividing rather than unifying Wythenshawe. In 1969 upgrading to motorway standard began, sacrificing 50,000 shrubs and trees, and the route was renamed the M56 connecting Manchester and Cheshire, with the full system opening in 1974-5.

Final years

In 1941, Parker was awarded the Howard Medal for services to Town Planning by the Town and Country Planning Association, on whose Council he served for many years. In 1943 he retired from his consultancy to First Garden City Ltd., developers of Letchworth. Late in 1946, a few weeks before his death on 21 February 1947, Barry Parker was visited by Lewis Mumford, who admired him as a consummate social artist and a loveable personality. The Letchworth Garden City Corporation acquired Parker's studio from his widow in 1973, and it was opened and extended as the First Garden City (Heritage) Museum, featuring the development of Letchworth and the contribution of Parker and Unwin to its built environment, in addition to the rich social life of the Garden City pioneers.

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Dr Mervyn Miller, 8 March 2012

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Notes

- (1) R U Letter to Ethel Parker, 9 August 1891, Hitchcock-Rich Collection, Grassy Hill, Connecticut.
- (2) (R) B. Parker, transposing a favourite quotation for Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) advocating building 'plain cottages to make all the fine palaces look cheap and vulgar', *The Building News* 19 and 26 July 1895, and privately published offprint with illustrations by Parker including 'The artisan's living room', Buxton *The advertiser and list of visitors*.
- (3) Sir Frederic Osborn, in conversation with the author April/May 1978. He also emphasised the point in his letters exchanged with Lewis Mumford over many years.
- (4) Garden City Pioneer Co., Engineering Committee Minutes 20 October 1903, seen by the author at Letchworth Garden City Corporation Offices in 1980. The interview was conducted by Howard Pearsall, Ebenezer Howard and W H Lever. EH asked Parker about Unwin's experience as an *engineer*. In reply to Pearsall's question as to how long it would take to prepare a plan, Parker stated that 7-10 days on site was sufficient, with the finalised plan available within five weeks.
- (5) Told by Mabel Parker to Brigid Grafton Green, long-time archivist of Hampstead Garden Suburb, she also wrote of it to Lewis Mumford, who recounted it to me in conversation at Amenia, New York, June 1978.
- (6) The first membership list dated May 1914 included Parker and Unwin and other architects – Edwin Lutyens and Sir Aston Webb, the surveyor Thomas Adams (first estate manager at Letchworth) and Patrick Geddes. Ebenezer Howard was elected an honorary member. Cherry, G 1974 *The evolution of British Town Planning*, Leighton Buzzard, Leonard Hill 59-60.
- (7) Parker, B 1919 144. His projects in Brussels included two large houses for the Drugman family possibly in the suburban commune of Uccle, and a co-operative development of 'Associated Homes'. It is possible that the schemes were abandoned after the invasion of Belgium in August 1914.
- (8) Parker and Unwin were both delegates at the RIBA Conference: Unwin had assembled the exhibition, including substantial material on the Chicago Park Girdle from Daniel Burnham's office. See *Town Planning Conference, London, 10-15 October 1910. 'Transactions'*, London, Royal Institute of British Architects and *Ibid.*, *Exhibition of Drawings and Models*.
- (9) Lewis Mumford (1895-1990) in conversation with the author, Amenia, New York, June 1978.
- (10) *Ibid.*